



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 19, 2009

Mr. David M. Swope
Assistant County Attorney
Harris County
1019 Congress, 15th Street
Houston, Texas 77002-1700

OR2009-03572

Dear Mr. Swope:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 347197.

The Harris County Medical Examiner (the "examiner") received two requests for the autopsy and toxicology reports related to a named deceased individual. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

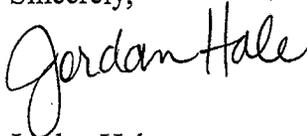
Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §552.301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information relates to an ongoing criminal investigation/prosecution. You have provided an affidavit from the Harris County Sheriff's Office stating release of the submitted information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of this case. Based on these representations and our review of the submitted documents, we find that section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to submitted information. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ*

ref'd n.r.e., 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (per curiam) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases); *see also* Open Records Decision Nos. 474 (1987), 372 (1983) (where incident involving allegedly criminal conduct is still under active investigation or prosecution, section 552.108 may be invoked by any proper custodian of information relating to incident). Accordingly, the examiner may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Jordan Hale
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JH/jb

Ref: ID# 342197

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: 2 Requestors
(w/o enclosures)